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The theme of death in Čiurlionis' art and music

ABSTRACT. The main aim of this article is to clearly articulate how the concept of “death” influenced the creative process of Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis’ (1875–1911) art and music, and examine the path he took to compose his symphonic poem “Dies irae”, a work which has long been neglected by researchers.

The research method will be by looking through the symbolist tendencies of the time, especially philosophy. The way philosophy affected Čiurlionis’s creative process will be discussed first, followed by how the concept of “death” is reflected in Čiurlionis’ paintings. Also, the theme of “Dies irae” itself will be observed from a path of religious music, which was another important stream of Čiurlionis’ creativity throughout his life. Finally, the manuscript of Čiurlionis’ symphonic poem “Dies irae” will be examined in some detail.

Some research on music and art based on the concept of “death” or “Dies irae” has been done already by Ernest Newman (1915), Robin Gregory (1953), Radosław Okulicz-Kozaryn (2010) and Audra Versekėnaitė (2011). However, Čiurlionis’ symphonic poem “Dies irae” has never been researched in detail before. Therefore, the final objective of this article is also to reveal the creative process of Čiurlionis’ symphonic poem “Dies irae” and show the structures and themes used in the work in detail for the first time.

The theme of “death” stayed deep in Čiurlionis’ mind throughout his career. Čiurlionis was not simply a composer and painter, but an artist with wide knowledge of the visual arts, cosmology, philosophy, history, literature and poetry. His creative process was therefore almost certainly influenced by the symbolist tendencies of the time and especially its philosophical concept of “life and death” from Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) and Immanuel Kant (1724–1804).

Many of the art works of Čiurlionis are related to the theme of death. He painted the cycle *Funeral Symphony* in 1903. During his studies in Leipzig, he was impressed by Arnold Böcklin’s (1827–1901) *Die Toteninsel* (Isle of the Dead) and painted the series *Serenity* (I 1903/1904 and II 1904/1905 respectively) which shows most clearly the influence of ideas of “death” and “serenity” from Böcklin’s painting. Moreover, Čiurlionis’ most unusual response to Böcklin’s painting can be found in his peculiar triptych, *Rex* (1904–1905).

KEY-WORDS:
Čiurlionis, *Dies irae*,
Richard Strauss,
symphonic poem,
death, life.

Čiurlionis composed music with religious themes during his studies in Warsaw 1894–1899 and Leipzig 1901–1902, including settings of the “Kyrie”, “Gloria”, “Credo”, “Sanctus”, “Agnus”, “Requiem” (separate parts of the Mass) and a cantata “De Profundis”. Though, Čiurlionis did not compose an entire work based on the Mass or the Requiem Mass, his deep immersion in religious music is quite evident.

As a composer, Čiurlionis was also influenced by music which took “death” and “life” as its theme. He admitted in a letter that he went to the Peters Library in Leipzig to copy the scores of Richard Strauss' symphonic poems “Tod und Verklärung” (Death and Transfiguration), Op. 24 and “Ein Heldenleben” (A Hero's Life), Op. 40. Čiurlionis was influenced by philosophical ideas and always thought about the fundamental questions of human life. So he chose to copy these particular scores by Strauss, rather than any of the operas or his other symphonic poems such as “Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks” or “Don Juan” which have a quite different mood and are based on other aesthetic priorities. In Čiurlionis' symphonic poem “Dies irae”, there are some noticeable similarities to Strauss' symphonic poems “Tod und Verklärung” and “Heldenleben” in its forms and its basic concepts.

Finally, Čiurlionis' symphonic poem “Dies irae” has not been carefully researched for a long time. However, when we look at the unpublished manuscript, it is a truly elaborate work containing a treasure trove of themes from previous musical works composed throughout his life. Therefore, the form, structure and the themes used in the work will be examined.

Introduction

Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875–1911) lived during the very time when the idea of synthesis of the arts swept through the European artistic world and when, especially, Richard Wagner's (1813–1883) idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk* was revealing the possibilities of cross-genre arts. Charles Baudelaire's (1821–1867) *aesthetics of correspondences* manifested a fascination with inner resonances of various senses. Within the artistic atmosphere of *fin de siècle* symbolism, artists eagerly sought for new possibilities in the arts, and the theories of such philosophers as Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) influenced their creative process. The concept of “death” from their philosophies influenced artistic works created within the symbolist *milieu*. Arnold Böcklin's (1827–1901) painting *Die Toteninsel* (Isle of the Dead) had a

strong impact throughout Europe on not only painters but also on composers such as Hans Huber (1852–1921), Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943) and Max Reger (1873–1916) by interrelating beyond the realm of the arts. Čiurlionis was not an exception. He was also deeply influenced by symbolism concerning “death”, and painted several works based on this concept. His symphonic poem “Dies irae”, composed at the very end of his life, may also have been under the influence of the concept of “death”.

The symbolist tendencies of the time and its influence on Čiurlionis from a philosophical approach

As mentioned above, Čiurlionis lived during the very time when the idea of synthesis of the arts swept through the European artistic world. Since Čiurlionis was professionally educated as a composer and a painter, he was at home in both worlds and his imagination could easily cross their borders. In fact Čiurlionis was a person with a broad scope of knowledge. He was interested in visual arts, cosmology, philosophy, history, literature and poetry, and attended lectures held by Bronisława Wołman, the mother of his friend Bronisław Wołman. Among the lecturers was Professor Adam Marburg (1855–1913) who was a philosopher and theoretician of knowledge. He taught in Warsaw's secret university (established as an alternative to the official Russian-speaking Imperial University of Warsaw), published his works in learned and popular journals,¹ and was also a follower of the German psychologist and physiologist Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920). Čiurlionis was an active participant in these lectures and discussions. Influenced by Wundt, Čiurlionis painted *Friendship* (1907; dedicated to Bronisława Wołman) and *The Thought and Truth* (1905) (Kazokas 2006: 55). Moreover, in Čiurlionis' family library in Druskininkai, there were many books written by poets, writers and philosophers such as Baudelaire, Poe, Hugo, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Kipling, Wilde and Nietzsche, etc. (Kazokas 2006: 46). In the artistic atmosphere of *fin de siècle* symbolism, Čiurlionis may have well sought, like other artists, for new possibilities in the arts, and had his creative process influenced by the new philosophies. Nietzsche was an admirer of Schopenhauer, especially his *The World as Will and Representation* whose basic idea was inspired by the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). In the fourth volume of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*, there is a section about his ideas on “life” and “death”: Nietzsche's theory of eternal recurrence, which first appeared in *Also sprach Zarathustra* (Thus Spoke Zarathustra), clearly shows Schopenhauer's influence

1 *Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN*, vol. 2, 1974: 818.

in its positive affirmation of “life” which is connected to an idea of “death”. Čiurlionis may have read Nietzsche and may have been influenced by Nietzsche’s, and indirectly Schopenhauer’s and Kant’s, philosophies of “life and death”.

Čiurlionis’ paintings based on the concept of “death”

When we look at the art works of Čiurlionis, we can find several works related to the theme of death. He painted the cycle *Funeral Symphony* in 1903. During his studies in Leipzig, he was impressed by Böcklin’s *Die Toteninsel*, and painted the series *Serenity* (I 1903/1904 and II 1904/1905 respectively), which most clearly shows the influence of ideas of “death” and “serenity” in Böcklin’s painting. Moreover, his most unusual response to Böcklin’s painting can be found in his peculiar triptych *Rex* (1904–1905).

Among European symbolist paintings, Böcklin’s *Isle of the Dead* (the 1st version, 1880) was quite popular throughout Europe and had an impact on not only writers and painters but also several composers. The symbolic motive of *Isle of the Dead* fascinated Böcklin and he painted it several times from 1880 to 1886 – five versions in total. The pictorial structure of *Isle of the Dead*, common to all five versions, is quite simple. A calm sea around a solitary island. Tall cypress trees grow in clusters on the rocky island, and a stone structure (a kind of a cemetery) surrounds an inlet. A boat approaches the island slowly. A person in a white cloth stands on board, accompanying a coffin. The scene appears extremely quiet without the slightest sound or movement of wind or waves. It had been reproduced many times in books and journals, and on printed sheets and postcards. It is said that every German family owned one of these reproductions.

Čiurlionis came to know Böcklin’s painting *Isle of the Dead* in his early years in Warsaw through his fellow Polish artists from the *Młoda Polska* (Young Polish) movement. The Polish artists who were influenced by Böcklin included Henryk Siemiradzki, Zofia Gordziałkowska, and Adam Chmielewski. Siemiradzki’s *Departure from an Island at Night* (c. 1890) shows a strong resemblance to Böcklin’s original painting (Okulicz-Kozaryn 2010: 95).

In May 1902, Čiurlionis saw the painting for the first time at the Museum der Bildenden Künste in Leipzig. It was Böcklin’s fifth version (1886), with a brighter-coloured sky and sea, slightly lacking the mournful serenity of the earlier versions.

In his letter to his friend Eugeniusz Morawski, Čiurlionis wrote:

“In the local museum, there are eight halls. I walked in there for the first time, and I was surprised: in the main hall, there were Murillo and Böcklin. What will come next? But in the other rooms the paintings were less beautiful, while in the last room they were

indescribably ugly. I remember that in the last hall I felt sorry and sad that I had not seen any more beautiful paintings. So I returned to Böcklin" (Čiurlionytė-Karužienė 1960: 150–152).

While in Leipzig, Čiurlionis also heard in February 1902 Hans Huber's Symphony No. 2, which has *Isle of the Dead* as its subtitle. Čiurlionis wrote his impressions:

"Last Wednesday for the first time the Symphony of Böcklin was performed. I cherished so much the great hope – and nothing. A lot of noise, organ, solo, strings, etc. but what was most significant was missing. The finale consists, it seems, of eight short pieces – illustrations to Böcklin's pictures. Some are not bad, some very beautiful, but on the whole I hoped for much more from the Symphony of Böcklin" (Čiurlionytė-Karužienė 1960: 91–94).

From his bitterly disappointed comment, it could be presumed that Čiurlionis already knew many of Böcklin's paintings and by imaging these works in his mind, he judged Huber's music as less than satisfactory. However, Čiurlionis became an ardent admirer of Böcklin's masterpiece and was eager to adopt its artistic essentials into his own artistic creation.

As a painter, Čiurlionis tried to assimilate himself into Böcklin's view of the world. In September 1903, he wrote from Warsaw to his brother Povilas, on the back of a postcard of Böcklin's *Prometheus*: "I've already painted a symbolic painting. If you want, I can send you the reproduction" (Čiurlionytė-Karužienė 1960: 168). A month later, he wrote: "So far, I am drawing 'Funeral Symphony', I have five images" (Čiurlionytė-Karužienė 1960: 168); he wrote this on the back of another postcard with his own watercolour drawing of *Serenity*, depicting an island with two lighthouses which very much resemble human eyes. Here is a notable description on "serenity" in his letter to Morawski: "<...> I like serenity, but today I cannot stand it. It seems like someone is snooping. Scary. An idea came to my mind that in this serenity there is an important secret <...> now serenity makes the impression of a grand pause. (Geniek, please explain.) It's hard. The past has disappeared, the future is no longer there, and the present – pause, – nothing. Imagine that, if you will" (Čiurlionytė-Karužienė 1960: 146).

From these letters and the drawing, his commitment to Böcklin's works seems obvious, most especially his inclination towards symbols of "death" and "serenity".

Among Čiurlionis' paintings, the series *Serenity* (I 1903/1904 and II 1904/1905 respectively) most clearly shows the influence of Böcklin's *Isle of the Dead*. The motive of a rocky desert island surrounded by a calm sea is almost identical, and the gloomy

mood of tranquillity of Čiurlionis' *Serenity* reveals his devotion to the example of Böcklin. The depiction of two lighthouses may be a reminiscence of the frontal gate of *Isle of the Dead*.

Also, Landsbergis pointed out that “Full of a mysterious mood, *Night* (also known by its other name – *Evening*): a boatman, silently rowing towards us through a dark gorge under a glowing in the sky arched bridge, would have come here from A. Böcklin's *Isle of the dead*. This obvious parallel (a figure standing in a boat with white long clothes) indicated by A. Savickas in “Menotyra”, 4, p. 74, could be also seen in the first painting of the *Rex* cycle, and through its plot etymology could also be linked to Charon from the myths of antiquity” (Landsbergis 1976: 252).

Another series, *Funeral Symphony (IV and V, 1903)* contains vague echoes of Böcklin's imagery. The settings of these scenes are totally different; however the motifs of cypress trees, “a pre-Christian symbol of death, since it was believed that once it was cut it would never grow again”² and the sombre mountainous area somewhat remind us of Böcklin's iconography.

Čiurlionis' most unusual response to Böcklin's *Isle of the Dead* can be found in his peculiar triptych *Rex* (1904–1905). In these three pictures, the scenery is fundamentally identical. Only distances from the viewer differ, with the same view of an island with a colossal monument presented from three different distances. The transfer of viewpoint in the triptych is surely an unprecedented invention, demonstrating Čiurlionis' pictorial genius. He might have conceived this unusual device of viewpoints from the depiction of a tiny boat approaching the island in Böcklin's *Isle of the Dead*.

Music with religious themes composed by Čiurlionis

Čiurlionis started composing religious music during his studies in Warsaw in 1894–1899 and Leipzig in 1901–1902. At the Warsaw Institute of Music, Čiurlionis studied composition under Zygmunt Noskowski (1846–1909) and composed religious music such as separate parts of the Mass – “Kyrie” (1897, DK 11.14/VL 12), “Requiem” (1897, DK 11.12/VL 13), “Gloria” (1897, DK 11.12/VL 14), “Glorify” (1897, DK 11.19/VL 15), “Agnus” (1899, DK 24.2/VL 16), as well as religious music for mixed choir “Let Us not Grieve” (1899, DK 24.6/VL 17), “You, oh Lord” (The second part of the cantata *De Profundis*) (1899, DK 25/VL 9), “Święty Boże” (*Sanctus Deus*) (1899–1900, DK 40/VL 70) and a cantata “De Profundis” for mixed choir and symphony orchestra (1899, DK 25/VL 8).

2 The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Art & Architecture (2 ed.), 2013: 140.

In 1901, he composed a prelude for piano “Angelus Domini” (1901, DK 57/VL 184) whose title was known from family reminiscences and given by a brother of the composer, Stasys Čiurlionis, in his 1902 letter, while the composer’s youngest sister, Jadvyga Čiurlionytė, linked this music to the church bell in Druskininkai and evening prayer (Landsbergis 2004: 411). At the Leipzig conservatoire, Čiurlionis studied counterpoint under Salomon Jadassohn (1831–1902) and composition under Carl Reinecke (1824–1910); in that time, he composed further religious music, “Sanctus” (1902, DK 104/VL 18) and “Kyrie” (1902, DK 116/VL 19). In later years, he composed a prelude for piano titled “Pater Noster” (1904, DK 153/VL 260), whose “title was according to the first edition, authentic and known from reminiscences of Čiurlionis’ family” (Landsbergis 1986: 277–278). Also, a prelude for piano was titled “Święty Boże” (1909, DK 323/VL 343, Manuscript unfinished): its missing final bars were given different reconstructions by J. Čiurlionytė and V. Landsbergis. The melody was identified by the composer’s sister, Jadvyga Čiurlionytė, but she did not use it as a title in her editions due to the total prohibition of religious themes under the Soviet regime. The original title, *Šventas Dieve*, was used for the first time in Landsbergis’s edition in 2004 (Landsbergis 2004: 358–360). According to Bruveris (mentioned in 2014), “*Święty Boże – Sanctus Deus* (Lith. *Šventas Dieve, Šventas galingasis, Šventas amžinasis*) is a Trisagion (sung by Catholics during the Great Friday liturgy) as well as a start of public prayer. Čiurlionis fully used the melody in this Prelude”. Finally, Čiurlionis composed a symphonic poem “Dies irae” at the very end of his life.

Music for the Mass Ordinary, especially for the sung Ordinary, usually consists of “Kyrie”, “Gloria”, “Credo”, “Sanctus” and “Agnus Dei”. However, Čiurlionis composed “Kyrie”, “Gloria”, “Credo”, “Sanctus”, “Pater Noster”, “Agnus” as original, independent works and he also composed “Requiem” (not finished, only 22 bars of the manuscript survived) and “Dies irae”.

Some of his religious music was based on the rhymed Psalm text by Polish classical poet Jan Kochanowski (1530–1584) (Misiukevičius 2000: 6). According to Vytautas Landsbergis, “J. Kochanowski’s Psalter was arranged in the 16th century by M. Gomulka, a Polish composer of the Renaissance. Gomulka’s compositions were included in the repertoire of the choir of the Warsaw Institute of Music when Čiurlionis studied there. It is a fact that for the length of his study at Warsaw Institute of Music, Čiurlionis sung in the Institute’s choir conducted by J. Statler” (Landsbergis 1986: 147) – and the choir’s repertoire included a lot of religious music. Other compositions such as “Glorify” (1897, DK 11.19/VL 15), “Let Us not Grieve” (1899, DK 24.6/VL 17), “You, oh Lord” (The second part of the cantata *De Profundis*) (1899, DK 25/VL 9) and a cantata

“De Profundis” for mixed choir and symphony orchestra (1899, DK 25/VL 8) are also based on the text from Kochanowski’s Psalter (Misiukevičius 2000: 6–7). Though Čiurlionis did not compose a single complete setting of the Mass, his deep immersion in religious music is evident from these facts.

Richard Strauss’ symphonic poems “Tod und Verklärung” and “Heldenleben” and its concept of “death” and “life”

During his studies in Leipzig in 1902, as mentioned earlier, Čiurlionis went to the Peters Library to copy the score of Strauss’ symphonic poems “Tod und Verklärung” (Death and Transfiguration), Op. 24 and “Ein Heldenleben” (A Hero’s Life), Op. 40. It seems likely he was disappointed in Professor Reinecke’s instrumentation lessons, and wanted to study the music of Berlioz or R. Strauss, and in particular the music genre that meant most to him – the symphonic poem. In his letters Čiurlionis reports the situation at the conservatoire to his friend, Morawski:

“More and more often they dig out Berlioz, and rightly so. I always liked that man. Recently I heard his overture “Benvenuto Cellini”: charming, and it sounds – even pleasurable. I would like to orchestrate like him and Strauss. Nothing to say, paints nicely. <...> Reinecke is a pedant about form, yet in this matter he never reproaches me, even when I am writing some of these things for the first time” (Čiurlionytė-Karužienė 1960: 93).

“But all of this is nothing. You shouldn’t care about the instrumentation. You will look at few good scores, you will be fine not only without professors but without textbooks as well. You will get from me two of Strauss’ things: “Death” and “Heroic Life”. This will be enough for your whole instrumentation study” (Čiurlionytė-Karužienė 1960: 162).

In the first page of the score of “Death and Transfiguration”, there is a poem which was written by Strauss’ friend Alexander Ritter (1833–1896) according to the composer’s request. The story of the symphonic poem is clear – “a dying artist, obsessed by an artistic Ideal, is transfigured at death to recognize his Ideal in eternity”³. It was written in modified sonata form in C minor, and the whole life of a man is described by “a quiet, syncopated introduction (‘breathing irregularly’), then an agitated exposition (‘racked by terrible pain’), followed by an episodic developmental space: dreams of childhood, youthful passions. What follows is the principal theme of the work, that of the artistic

3 Gilliam, B. 2007–2013: Strauss, Richard. <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [Accessed on 2014 04 05].

Ideal. The restatement of this lofty melody in the extended coda is what Strauss termed the 'point of culmination', and it is indeed one of the most exquisite moments in all his symphonic works: even his arch-conservative father was moved"⁴. Another of Strauss' symphonic poems, "Ein Heldenleben" (A Hero's Life), has been compared with "Don Quixote", in which the 'hero' is again Strauss himself. Gilliam explains that "The six sections of the work – the hero, his adversaries, his life's companion, his deeds of war, his works of peace, his withdrawal from the world – do not go beyond this fundamental idea. [...] "Ein Heldenleben" treats two important subjects familiar from earlier works: the Nietzschean struggle between the individual and his outer and inner worlds, and the profundity of domestic love"⁵. In here, Nietzsche's theory of eternal recurrence, which represents positive affirmation of "life" and is connected to an idea of "death", could be seen in its narrative.

In fact, there are some influences from Strauss found in Čiurlionis' symphonic poem "Dies irae". His symphonic poem was also based on modified sonata form in C minor and consisted of the series of themes from musical works which were composed throughout composer's life. It could be regarded as the recollection of his whole life by a person who was resigned to die.

Analysis of Čiurlionis' symphonic poem "Dies irae"

Čiurlionis composed his symphonic poem "Dies irae" at the very end of his life. It may be considered as a part of his series of musical works on religious themes, or one inspired by his strong inclination to the concept of "death". Or simply as a result of his study on the style of a symphonic poem and instrumentation of Berlioz and Strauss's music. It is important to notice that Čiurlionis did not use the well-known plainchant "Dies irae" as a resource of thematic material for his composition. Instead, he used a popular chant "Sanctus Deus" as it was sung in his own country. The manuscript of Čiurlionis' "Dies irae"⁶ remained unpublished on 65 sheets of music with 1,111 bars⁷. Mainly it is not a score ready for a performance – rather, the manuscript is of a large sketch in which some additional improvements are required by a music editor or even another composer. But the main idea of thematic and structural expression is clear. The genre of the composition is clear from the dedication – Dies ira[e] poemat symfonic

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 On the manuscript, the title handwritten by Čiurlionis was misspelled as "Dies ira".

7 It was not 1,122 bars, as counted and written by Čiurlionis himself on the manuscript.

znydla mojoj Zoski (pol. – Dies ira[e], symphonic poem for my Sophie)⁸. Let us now examine the structure and some main themes used in the work.

After a thematic analysis of the poem, we can notice that Čiurlionis included a lot of themes from previous musical works, composed in 1900–1906. The themes used here are from compositions for the piano (*Pater Noster*, Preludes DK 283/VL 318, DK 292/VL 328 and DK 242/VL 300), for the organ (Fugue in C minor), for choir (“Święty Boże”, “Bėkit, bareliai” and “Sėjau rūtą”) and even fragments from the symphonic poem “In the Forest”. There are also some themes or melodic fragments which are still not identified. In total, there are 12 identified themes, 4 rhythmic themes imitating fanfares and 4 unidentified themes⁹ (see Appendix 1). Usage of known themes in the poem “Dies irae” means that the early works of Čiurlionis were understood by him not only as discrete compositions but as if they were sections or the main musical ideas of a grand new composition composed in his last years.

Five of all the used themes repeatedly reappear in the composition. They are “Święty Boże” (*Sanctus Deus*), Fugue in C minor, “Bėkit, bareliai”, “Sėjau rūtą” and “Pater Noster”. Interestingly, these five themes consist of two religious themes, two Lithuanian folksong melodies and a Fugue. Also, the usage of other melodic fragments and shortened themes remind us of Wagner’s operas or Scriabin’s musical works where the system of leitmotifs were developed. The difference is that Čiurlionis did not explain the meaning or related mood/emotion/sense of these short melodic fragments.

Returning to the structural analysis of the poem, it can be explained in three possible ways. First, it is possible to understand the overall structure of the poem as being in three parts – “A-B-B₁”. This structure is based on a proportional repeating of the theme of “Święty Boże” (*Sanctus Deus*).

A second possible way to explain the poem’s structure is based on the dominating themes, their sequence of tonalities and usage of the diminished 7th chord, which obviously separate one part from another. The structure of four parts arises in this case: “A-B-C-D”.

The third way of explaining the poem’s structure could be understanding it as a freely modified sonata form, consisting of “Intro-A-B-A-Coda”: that is, an overture-like Introduction with themes of “Święty Boże” (*Sanctus Deus*) and Fugue in C minor in main tonality (Tonic), followed by the themes of “Bėkit, bareliai” (principal theme) and “Pater Noster” (subordinate theme in subdominant), and then, the additionally added new theme of “Sėjau rūtą” (an episode instead of usual development part, in subdominant again),

8 National M. K. Čiurlionis Art Museum. Manuscript Čm 16, p. 00804.

9 Identification of themes was made by Prof. Dr. Darius Kučinskas.

return of “Bėkit, bareliai” and “Pater Noster” (recapitulation part, in main tonality – Tonic) and then Coda with themes of “Święty Boże” (*Sanctus Deus*) and Fugue in C minor in Tonic at the end of a poem. The development part of the traditional sonata form is missing and the only feature of the sonata structure can be noticed in the way Čiurlionis used main themes and its tonalities (repeated themes are put into main tonality).

As a matter of course, the more precise analysis of the structure of the symphonic poem “Dies irae” needed. But even now, if we agree Čiurlionis tried to use the sonata form as a basis for a whole composition, it shows us that Čiurlionis continuously was thinking about various explotations of the sonata, forming all of his life since his studies in Warsaw where he wrote his first piano sonatas. Furthermore, after his professional studies in painting, he tried to explore the sonata form in his paintings (since 1906) and in literary poems too (about 1905–1907). So there is a solid history behind Čiurlionis' return to the sonata form in his music, after all his efforts to embody this structure in other forms of art expression.

As we can see here, Čiurlionis elaborately adopted these themes into his symphonic poem “Dies irae”, not just presenting them in a simple sequence of musical events. For example, on sheet No. 826 (Fig. 1) three themes such as an unidentified theme, a theme from “Święty Boże” (*Sanctus Deus*) and Prelude (DK 242/VL 300) are presented concurrently, in counterpoint, within three bars.

Also, on sheet No. 850 (Fig. 2), four themes such as a theme from the symphonic poem “In the forest”, Fugue in C minor and “Sėjau rūtą”, could be seen in counterpoint within four bars in one brace of staves, and also a symphonic Poem in C major (DK 254/VL 310) is included in the same sheet.

On sheet No. 865 (Fig. 3), two themes such as a theme from “Święty Boże” (*Sanctus Deus*) and Fugue in C minor are also seen presented in counterpoint.

The image shows a manuscript page with three staves of music. At the top left, the number '178' is handwritten. At the top center, the page number '00826' is printed. The first staff is labeled 'Not identified theme' and contains a melodic line. The second staff is labeled 'Sanctus Deus' and contains a bass line. The third staff is labeled 'Prelude DK242/ VL 300' and contains a complex rhythmic pattern. The three staves are written in counterpoint, with the music overlapping across the staves.

Fig. 1. Manuscript of the symphonic poem “Dies irae”, p. 00826

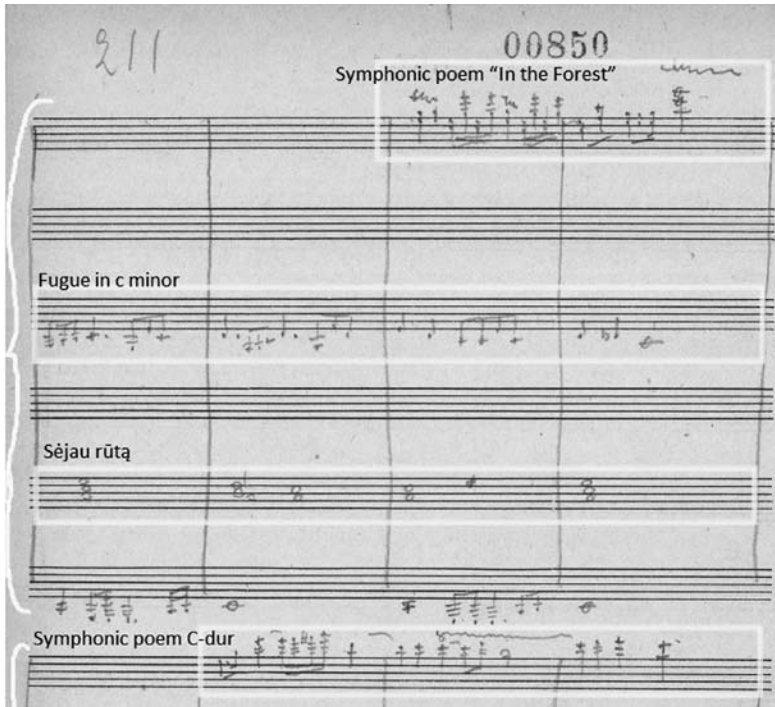


Fig. 2. Manuscript of the symphonic poem "Dies Irae", p. 00850

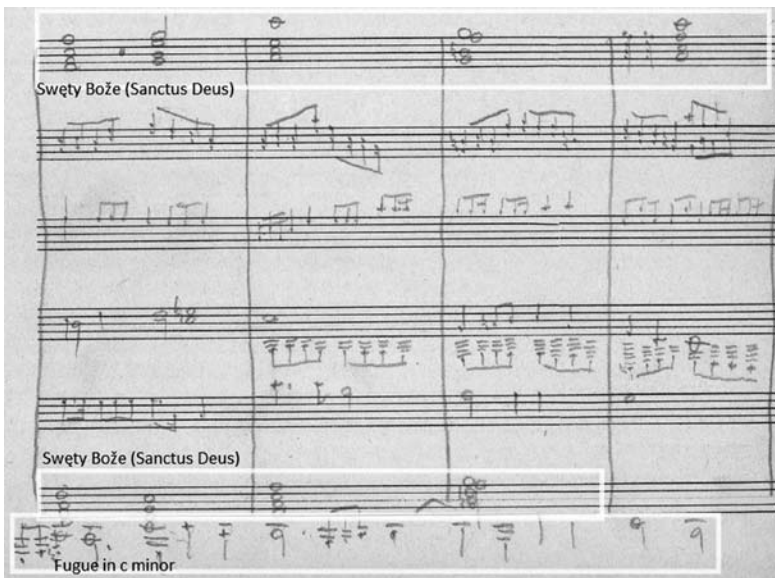


Fig. 3. Manuscript of the symphonic poem "Dies Irae", p. 00865

In such a way, Čiurlionis composed this huge symphonic poem by connecting themes like main thematic material, sometimes putting themes together simultaneously in counterpoint. This work had been forgotten for a long time. However, it could be said that this symphonic poem “Dies irae” is a treasure trove of themes from his previous musical works reworked by a mature and skilful composer, Čiurlionis. This work must have been a challenging work for him at the very end of his life.

Conclusion

When we try to clarify how the theme of death influenced Čiurlionis while he composed his symphonic poem “Dies irae”, we realise that the theme of death in his works was complexly intertwined, sometimes with his paintings and other times with his music. Since Čiurlionis composed religious music during his studies in Warsaw 1894–1899 and Leipzig 1901–1902, he may have thought of his symphonic poem “Dies irae” as an exploration of similar ideas and themes in a new conceptual level. This was notwithstanding the fact the “Dies irae” originated as a Gregorian chant, and was adopted in Berlioz’s programme music or a symphonic poem of Liszt. Moreover, Rachmaninoff quoted the “Dies irae” motifs in his symphonic poem which was also inspired by Böcklin’s painting *Isle of the Dead*, and tried to superimpose this on the musical theme of death to express the image of the painting through music. However, even though Čiurlionis gave “Dies irae” as a title for his symphonic poem, he never adopted the melody of “Dies irae” nor left traces in his actual music that he was influenced directly by Böcklin’s painting *Isle of the Dead*. The structure and the narrative theme of “life and death” shows similarities to symphonic poems by Richard Strauss rather than those of Berlioz, Liszt and Rachmaninoff. From this perspective, it seems that Čiurlionis’ symphonic poem “Dies irae” was composed in a broader sense of embodiment of the concept of the death and as a retrospection which consisted of the series of themes from musical works composed throughout the composer’s life. It could be regarded as the recollection of his whole life by a person who was resigned to die. Therefore, this work could be regarded as a culmination of all his artistic works too.

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APPENDIX 1



Świąty Boże (1899–1900, DK 40/VL 70)



Fugue in C minor (1902, DK 92/VL 219)



Sėjau rūtą (1900, DK 42/VL 179)



Bėkit, bareliai (1906, DK 202/VL 279)



Tėve mūsų (Pater noster) (1904, DK 153/VL 260)



Prelude (1906, DK 242/VL 300)



Prelude in C major (1908, DK 283/VL 318)



Prelude in D minor (1908–1909, DK 291/VL 325)



Prelude in C major (1908, DK 292/VL 328)



Fugue in B flat minor (1908–1909, DK 293/VL 345)



Poem in C major (1907, DK 254/VL 7)



Poem "In the Forest" (1901, DK 56/VL 1)

Fanfares:



Not identified themes:



Mirties tema Čiurlionio dailėje ir muzikoje

SANTRAUKA. Straipsnio tikslas – atskleisti „mirties“ koncepciją ir jos įtaką Čiurlionio kūrybai bei išnagrinėti simfoninės poemos „Dies irae“, kuri ilgą laiką muzikologų buvo ignoruojama, atsiradimo aplinkybes.

Žvelgiant per simbolizmo tendencijas ir ypač per filosofiją, paveikusių Čiurlionių, aptariama jo kūryboje įkūnyta mirties tema. Lygiagrečiai poema „Dies irae“ nagrinėjama per religinės muzikos, kitų esminių Čiurlionio kūrybos temų prizmę. Galiausiai detalai tiriama simfoninės poemos rankraštis.

Mirties tema ir jos atspindžiai Čiurlionio kūryboje iš dalies yra nagrinėti šių autorių darbuose: E. Newmano „The Music of Death“ (1915), R. Gregory'o „Dies irae“ (1953), R. Okulicz-Kozaryno „Predilection of Modernism for Variations. Čiurlionis' Serenity among Different Developments of the Theme of the Toteninsel“ (2010), taip pat A. Versekėnaitės „Between Borrowing and Intertextuality: The *Dies irae* in Twentieth Century Music“ (2011). Tačiau Čiurlionio simfoninė poema „Dies irae“ iki šiol nebuvo tyrinėta. Taigi lygiagretus straipsnio tikslas yra atskleisti šios simfoninės poemos sukūrimo istoriją, jos sandarą bei struktūrą ir aptarti teminę medžiagą. Apibendrinant tyrimus konstatuojama, kad sekvencija „Dies irae“ kūrinyje nėra cituojama, kaip yra darę Berliozas, Lisztas ar Rachmaninovas. Čiurlionio plėtojama gyvenimo ir mirties tematika artimesnė R. Strausso estetikai, be to, į savo kūrinių Čiurlionis įtraukė anksčiau sukurtų kompozicijų fragmentų, ir tai galima traktuoti kaip viso gyvenimo apmąstymą žmogaus, pasmerkto mirčiai. Taigi šią kompoziciją taip pat galėtume vertinti kaip visos menininko kūrybos kulminaciją.

REIKŠMINIAI

ŽODŽIAI:

Čiurlionis, *Dies irae*, Richardas Straussas, simfoninė poema, mirtis, gyvenimas.